A Message from the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children Maalla M'jid to the child delegates of the 2019 Asian Children's Summit

25-30 November | Bangkok, Thailand

Dear children and other participants,

Warm greetings to you all!

You have gathered in Bangkok to discuss many important topics and have already held many preparatory meetings and consultations in your own countries. I want to congratulate you for the crucial process and the work you do to strengthen children’s participation in your region.

I also want to commend the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Children and Women in Thailand, SAIEVAC, and CRC Asia as well as partnering organizations for organizing this Asian Children’s Summit.

My role as Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children is to connect people, organizations, and governments to work together to end violence against children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, just a few days ago turned thirty years, guaranteed the rights of every child to be heard and to be protected from violence.

I am very happy that you have made violence against children as one of the main themes to discuss in your meeting. I have promised to put children at the heart of every work. Children have clearly said, “nothing for us, without us.” And I take this very, very seriously.

Dear children, no one knows better than you the problems children face today. You are the key piece to end violence against children. We cannot end violence against children without children. Without you. You already played a key role in achieving change and in making the world a better and safer place for all; in making your own future. You are human rights defenders, active citizens, and drivers of positive change and we want to listen to your proposals, to support your initiatives, and to empower you, and to protect you.

Dear children and other participants, we have witnessed and applaud the growth over the past decade of children mobilizing people. All around the globe, children are pushing governments to address urgent issues such as the climate crisis, food, water, and much more. And indeed, children should be part of the planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies, programs, activities, at all levels – globally, regionally, nationally, and locally. It is the responsibility of us to empower children to participate and to protect them when they do.

Listening to children’s voices and treating children as active participants with full rights and being accountable to children is the only way to achieve peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. But participation is not just to listen to children who are natural leaders. Participation is and must be for all. That is also what the Sustainable Development Agenda calls for – to leave no one behind. Everyone has the right to express his or herself including the most vulnerable. This means those
who live in poverty, those with disability, those who have different beliefs, have different ethnicity or place of origin or because of their perceived sexual orientation.

As a final note, I also like to say that I salute the growing attention to the voices of youth in the recent years. But, at the same time we need to continue to have a focus on children as a distinct group as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I want to emphasize that the unique perspective of children cannot be replaced. We need to keep focused on the whole lifecycle of children and young people.

Dear children, I look forward to receiving your feedback from the Summit and we'll study carefully the recommendations that you will be putting forward and will use them to inform my work. Let me reiterate that I consider you as incredibly strong drivers for positive change.

I want to thank and commend you for your ongoing commitment and mobilization effort. With your help we can keep our promise to end violence against children by 2030 while ensuring that no child is left behind.

I wish you an excellent meeting and see you all in person very soon.

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